

Plays for Young Audiences

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The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

Story by
Mark Twain

Adapted for the Stage by
Timothy Mason

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn was first presented by The Children's Theatre Company for the 1980-81 season.

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Cast of Characters:

WHITE-SUITED GENTLEMAN

AUNT POLLY

TOM SAWYER

HUCKLEBERRY FINN

WIDOW DOUGLAS

MISS WATSON

JIM

BEN ROGERS

JOE HARPER

TOMMY BARNES

PAP

MRS. LOFTUS

THE DUKE

THE DAUPHIN

JAKE

MRS. HOBSON

REVEREND HOBSON

LEVI BELL

ABNER SHACKLEFORD

MARY JANE WILKS

SUSAN WILKS

JOANNA WILKS

AUNT SALLY

GEORGE

SILAS PHELPS

Ensemble includes: Townspeople, Slaves, Gospel Singers, Dancers, Musicians

Prologue

Stage preset: patterned light on rough-wood set, suggestive of a Mississippi River wharf. Black void of platforms. Solo harmonica and gentle lapping water. WHITE-SUITED GENTLEMAN wanders onstage, carrying a folded newspaper under his arm, smoking a cigar. He slowly ascends steps SR, dusts off the platform, takes his newspaper and begins to read. Lights fade to Blackout.

Scene One

Steamboat whistle. Orchestra strikes up a tune of the period: mid-Southern U.S.A. in the early 1840s. Lights rise on set teeming with activity. HUCK FINN, TOM SAWYER, BEN RODGERS, JOE HARPER, and TOMMY BARNES enter from USL with a whoop and run and leap into the river, while a small gathering of WOMEN remonstrate. The five boys continue to climb out of the river, dripping wet in their long underwear, and dive back in.

SAILORS and BLACKS carry cargo up riverboat ramp. TOWNSFOLK gather to observe activity, PASSENGERS embark with farewells and waves. CHILDREN -ranging in dress and demeanor from the ragged to the prim -gawk and play about the docks. Once the riverboat is loaded, it blows three blasts of its whistle and the ramp rises up and out of sight. PEOPLE wave and call goodbye, then gradually begin to disperse.

TOM SAWYER and HUCK FINN are about to take another plunge, when an angry AUNT POLLY appears and charges down to TOM. She grabs him by the ear.

TOM Honest, Aunt Polly, I never once touched that firecracker! It was Sid set it off, I swear. And it were Sid's idear to toss it beneath your rockin' chair when you was settin' in it, rockin'. It were Sid all the way . . . (AUNT POLLY twists his ear.) ...Ow!!

AUNT POLLY (Leading TOM off.) You hesh up, Tom Sawyer. Good afternoon, Huckleberry.

HUCK How do, Miz Polly. See you, Tom . . .

They are gone; so, too, the other boys. Other TOWNSPEOPLE wander off leaving HUCK and WHITE-SUITED GENTLEMAN who is staring after the departing steamboat and tentatively raises an arm in farewell, then lets it fall to his side. HUCK looks around, moves toward

platform, turns his back to audience and relieves himself. GENTLEMAN notices HUCK and coughs as a signal; HUCK looks over his shoulder, sees audience, and hurriedly buttons up his underwear.

HUCK (To audience.) You don't know about me without you've read a book by the name of The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, but that ain' t no matter . That book was made by Mr. Mark Twain and there was things he stretched . . .

GENTLEMAN Huckleberry . . . *(HUCK turns and sees the man's dark expression.)*

HUCK . . . but mainly he told the truth.

GENTLEMAN Hmm.

HUCK *(To GENTLEMAN.)* That ain' t nothin' . I never seen anybody but lied one time or another . . .

GENTLEMAN The point is taken, Huckleberry. *(GENTLEMAN sits back down again and resumes reading his newspaper.)*

HUCK *(To audience.)* So it were mostly a true book he wrote, with some stretchers, as I said before. *(GENTLEMAN glances up, rolls his eyes in exasperation, and returns to his reading.)* Now the way it winds up is this: Tom Sawyer and me, we found the money that the robbers hid in the cave and It made us rich. Tom and me, we got six thousand dollars apiece - all gold! Well, Judge Thatcher, he took it and put it out at interest, which fetched us a dollar a day all the year 'round – more'n a body could tell what to do with. *(WIDOW DOUGLAS enters.)* And then it started.

WIDOW *(Calling.)* Huckleberry?

HUCK The Widow Douglas, she took me for her son, 'cause of I didn't have no folks proper, 'ceptin' my Pap who beat me considerable when he was sober and more when he warn't.

WIDOW *(Seeing HUCK and moving to him.)* Huckleberry. You poor lamb, you.

HUCK She called me that, and she called me a lot of other names too, but she never meant no harm by it. *(To WIDOW.)* Yes'm, Widow Douglas.

WIDOW *(With an evangelical fervor.)* I'm a-goin' to civilize you, Huckleberry Finn! Yes, I'm a-goin' to civilize you with the help of the Good Lord and my good sister Miss Watson!

HUCK That's a regular team you got lined up there. *(To audience.)* Now Miz Watson, she was a tolerable slim old maid . . . *(MISS WATSON enters.)* . . . with goggles on. *(MISS WATSON peers about through her thick spectacles, sees HUCK and her sister, and approaches.)*

MISS WATSON But first you've got to change your ways, Huckleberry. When you die you want to go to the Good Place, don't you? *(No response; HUCK considers his options.)* Well, don't you?

HUCK Mebbe. But I don't think I stand a chance on it. I was brung up wrong.

WIDOW Nonsense, Huckleberry.

MISS WATSON All you have to do is pray, Huckleberry. "Whatsoever ye ask for, that shall ye get."

HUCK Anything?

MISS WATSON Anything.

HUCK *(Innocently.)* Well, if you kin get anythin' you pray for, Miz Watson, how come you cain't get fatted up some?

Pause as MISS WATSON studies the boy through her spectacles; WIDOW stifles a giggle.

MISS WATSON *(Grimly.)* The boy needs a bath, sister. I'll get us some water . Cold water. Ice cold water, so beneficial to the circulation of the blood. *(Turns and calls.)* Jim! You, Jim!

HUCK I feel fine just like I is . . .

WIDOW *(Kindly.)* Oh, we'll get you all cleaned up and dressed in the finest new clothes . . .

JIM *(Entering.)* Yes'm, Miz Watson?

MISS WATSON Fetch some water for Huckleberry's bath. And Jim - send the bucket way down into the well, way down.

HUCK Don't do it, Jim!

JIM sizes up the situation and chuckles; it grows into full laughter as he exits.

MISS WATSON *(Following JIM off.)* And get a move on, you lazy thing!

WIDOW DOUGLAS has been sorting HUCK'S old clothes.

WIDOW How do you rip your clothes so, Huckleberry?

HUCK I ain't sartin. I goes one way an' they goes the other, seemin'ly.

WIDOW Well, these are a dead loss. Climb into the tub, now, boy. *(HUCK obeys, climbing into a large wooden tub.)*

HUCK I don't understand about this prayin', Widow Douglas. Shoot, I prayed once an' got a fishline without any hooks. Well, it warn't no good to me without hooks. . .

WIDOW You must pray for spiritual gifts, Huckleberry. Take off them rags, now. *(HUCK removes his long underwear and hands them over the side of the tub.)*

WIDOW You must pray for the will to help other people, and do everything you can for other people . . .

HUCK Includin' Miz Watson?

WIDOW Certainly! *(MISS WATSON enters, carrying a blanket.)*

MISS WATSON *(Shouting behind her.)* Jim? Jim! *(To WIDOW.)* I tell you, that boy has got two speeds: slow and slower.

WIDOW You bring the towel, sister?

MISS WATSON I brought better'n a towel; I brought a fine, rough, horse-hair blanket!

HUCK Oh, Lordy . . .

MISS WATSON Just the thing to get the blood moving.

HUCK Just the thing to skin me alive . . . *(JIM enters carrying a bucket.)*

MISS WATSON Jim, you old slow-coach, get that water over here!

WIDOW Thankee, Jim. You pour, will you?

JIM I sho'ly will , ma'am.

MISS WATSON *(With relish.)* Now – is everybody ready?

GENTLEMAN Are you ready, Huckleberry? *(JIM pours. HUCK yells. SISTERS sigh with satisfaction. WIDOW takes bucket from JIM and JIM holds blanket up to mask HUCK in tub. GENTLEMAN stands as others freeze.)* That boy is standin' in the need of prayer. *(He chuckles and starts offstage, then stops.)* Oh, yes -just one thing before we begin. By order of the author: persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished. And persons attempting to find a plot . . . will be shot.

Sound of pistol shot offstage. Action. GENTLEMAN exits as WIDOW hands HUCK fresh clothes and he dresses.

MISS WATSON All right, Jim - unveil him! *(JIM drops the blanket. HUCK stands in front of tub, stiffly, dressed up dandy in a suit. SISTERS go into raptures.)*

WIDOW Oh, ain't he grand, Jim? The new Huckleberry Finn!

MISS WATSON Civilized at last! Praise the lord!

HUCK *(Feeling his pockets.)* My pipe . . . my pipe! Miss Watson, you din't throw out my pipe with my old clothes now, did you?

MISS WATSON I most certainly did! You don't want to go the the Bad Place and the Everlastin' Fire, do you?

HUCK I wish I was there this minute. *(MISS WATSON shrieks and swoons into WIDOW's arms.)*

WIDOW Huckleberry!

HUCK It appears I done said the wrong thing.

MISS WATSON *(Miraculously reviving from her "faint.")* You surely did, young man! Let go of me, sister! *(She charges off.)* Jim, get that tub outta there! *(JIM strikes tub.)*

MISS WATSON *(To herself.)* Never heard such wicked talk in all my born days! *(HUCK and WIDOW follow MISS WATSON into living room area.)*

WIDOW Please, sister, calm yourself . . .

HUCK I din't mean nothin' by it, Miz Watson. All I wanted was to go somewheres jist for a change; I warn't particular . . .

MISS WATSON I wouldn't ever say such a wicked thing for the whole world! I want to live so as to go to the Good Place.

HUCK *(Aside, to audience.)* Well, I couldn't see no advantage in goint where she was goin', but I never said so.

WIDOW I think you had better go to your room now, Huckleberry.

HUCK Yes 'm, Widow Douglas. I'm awful sorry, Miz Watson . . .

MISS WATSON Hmmmph! *(HUCK turns and ascends stairs to his bed.)* Enough to break a body's heart, that boy . . . *(WIDOW puts her hands on her sister to comfort her.)* Oh, don't hang on me so, sister!

MISS WATSON exits and WIDOW follows as afternoon lights rapidly shifts to dusk, then blackout.

Scene Two

HUCK sits on edge of bed and lights a candle. Clear, white stars shine in void. Sounds of the night: owl, whippoorwill, hound howl, and the bogus cry of of nearby Tom-cat.

TOM SAWYER (Off stage.) Mee-ow! (TOM enters and crouches beneath HUCK'S "bedroom.") Mee-ow! (HUCK springs from his bed and looks out his "window.")

HUCK (Jubilant.) Tom!

TOM (Angry whisper.) Huck Finn, cain't you do nothin' right?

HUCK Sorry, Tom. (Answers the signal.) "Mee-ow!"

TOM C'mon!

HUCK flings first one leg, then the other, over the edge of the platform and drops down onto stage level. A sudden gust of wind blows out the bedroom candle as the two boys exit.

On a different part of the stage candles are lit. TOM SAWYER holding court with HUCK, JOE HARPER, BEN RODGERS, and little TOMMY BARNES.

TOM Swear! (The boys hold up their palms.)

JOE HARPER I, JoeHarper...

BEN RODGERS Ben Rodgers...

HUCK Hucklehrry Finn . . . (Pause. HUCK nudges TOMMY.)

TOMMY BARNES Tommy Barnes!

TOM *(Unfolding a piece of paper and reads.)* . . . do solemnly swear to join this band of robbers called "Tom Sawyer's Gang," and to stick to the band, and to never tell any of its secrets. And if anybody who belongs to the band tells the secrets, he must have his throat cut, and then have his carcass burnt up, and the ashes scattered all around, and have his name blotted from the list with blood, and never mentioned again by the gang, but have a curse put on it and be forgot forever. Amen.

BEN That's a real beautiful oath, Tom.

JOE Did you think it up out o' your own head?

TOM Some of it. But the rest was out of books. Any gang that's high-toned has got one like it.

JOE Hey, Tom - I think it would be good if we killed the families of any boy who tells the secrets, too.

TOM That is good, Joe. We'll write that in, too . . . *(Taking a pencil to his paper.)* . . . "families."

BEN Wait a minute here's Huck Finn. He ain't got no family. What you goin' to do 'bout him?

TOM Well ain't he got a father?

BEN Yes, but he ain't been around for ever so long; some say he's dead.

HUCK I don't know 'bout that; I just hope he don't never corn back. I'm mighty scared of Pap.

TOM But don't you see, Huck? That mans you cain't join the Gang. Every boy's gotta have a family, or someone to kill, or it won't be fair.

HUCK Aw, shoot, Tom . . . I wanna join . . .

TOM Well, I sho'ly wish you could, Huck, but . . .

HUCK Jist a minute! You can have Miz Watson! Y'all can kill her, if ya want . . .

TOM Oh? Well, she'll do fine! That's settled then; Huck's in. Now, make the sign. (*They all perform a ritual to which they're well-accustomed: they slap their right thighs, slap their left thighs, lick their right thumbs, and press thumbs together all around in percussive unison.*) There now, that's all there is to it!

BEN Now, what all is this Gang goin' to do, Tom?

TOM Oh, robbery and murder, mainly. We stop carriages on the road, kill the people, and take their money. Simple.

TOMMY Do we always have to kill the people?

TOM Oh certainly!

HUCK Do we kill the woenen, too?

TOM Huck Finn, if I was as ignorant as you, I muldn't let folks know about it. Of course we don't kill the women! We fetch 'em back here to the cave and we're as polite as pie to 'em. Then they fall in love with us and don't never want to go home.

BEN Sounds like foolishness to me. We'll have the cave so filled up with women there won't be no place for us.

TOM Either we do it by the book or not at all, Ben Rogers! Now let's just get going . . .

BEN Who we gonna rob this time o' night?!

TOMMY I wanna go home. . .

TOM (*Suddenly.*) Shhh! (*All drop to the floor and blow out their candles. Faint moonlight.*) I think I hear a whole caravan of Spanish merchants and rich A-rabs a-comin'! Don't you, Huck?

HUCK Nope.

TOM Aw, hesh up and come on!

The BOYS rise to their feets and TOM leads them in a whoop of a battle-cry as they exit.

Scene Three

Stars fade out. Dim light of dawn. Rooster crcw. HUCK - his new suit ragged, tom and filthy - quietly makes his way from home. As he enters the house, carrying his shoes in hand, MISS WATSON enters, dressed in night-gawn and cap, sleepily carrying a covered porcelain chamber-pot . When she encounters HUCK, she screams.

MISS WATSON Ahhhhh! Ahhhhhh!

HUCK Mornin', Miz Watson.

MISS WATSON Ahhhh!

HUCK Miz Watson - it's me - Huck! I was just . . . um . . . out back . . .

WIDOW *(Enters in her nightclothes.)* Gracious, sister! What is it?

MISS WATSON *(Still clutching the chamber-pot with one hand while using the other - to point with accusation and horror at the boy.)* H...h... h... him!

WIDOW Huckleberry! Land sakes, child, what's happened to you?

HUCK Nothin'. I just . . . I just got up kinda early.

MISS WATSON *(Recovering her wits, and her rage munting.)* "Up early," my eye! Why, he's been out all night long! Just you look at him!

WIDOW Surely not, sister.

MISS WATSON *(Indicating HUCK'S disheveled appearance.)* Well?

WIDOW Why, Huckleberry - I could have sworn I heard you moving about upstairs. You weren't out the whole night? *(Pause.)* Were you, Huckleberry?

HUCK cannot lie to the WIDOW; he hangs his head in shame.

WIDOW Oh, Huckleberry . . .

MISS WATSON (Self -righteous.) Um-hmm! Um-hmmm! Now, there's another suit of clothes: ruined! Oh, it's an ungrateful creature! I told you, sister, you can not make a silk purse from a sow's ear, no more than you can civilize a piece of white trash like . . .

WIDOW (Angry.) You stop your mouth, sister! I won't have you talking like that! (She goes to HUCK and tearfully embraces him. MISS WATSON, offended, finally recalls her errand and starts off.)

MISS W ATSON (A parting shot.) That boy is destined to be hanged, you mark my words! Destined to be hanged! (She stalks off stage. WIDOW releases HUCK and turns away.)

WIDOW (Wiping a tear from her eyes.) Get upstairs to your room now, Huckleberry, and get out of them filthy clothes.

HUCK I . . . I don't mean to trouble you so, Widow Douglas. I won't no more... I promise . . .

WIDOW (Still not looking at him. Softly.) Go along now, Huckleberry.

Full of morose, HUCK turns and climbs the stairs to his room. WIDOW exits. A huge figure leaps out at HUCK from offstage , grabs HUCK around the neck and whirls him around in a head-lock.

HUCK Ahhh! -Pap! (PAP is about fifty; his face is white, with long mixed-up whiskers, and long, black greasy hair.)

PAP (Laughing for his victory.) His own self! (He hurls HUCK onto the bed.) Now ain't you a sweet-scented dandy, though? A bed. And bedclothes. And your own father's got to sleep with the hogs. I bet I'll knock some o' those frills out o' you before I'm done.

HUCK You cain't be here, Pap! (PAP crosses the room in a single step and slaps HUCK across the face.)

PAP You mind how you talk to me, boy! I'm a-standin' about all I can stand now, so don't gimme none o' your sass. You put on consid'rabable many airs since I been away. You're educated, too, they say? You can read and write? Who tole you you can meddle with such high-falutin' foolishness, hey? Who tole you you could?!

HUCK The Widow. She told me.

PAP An' who tole the Widow she could put in her shovel 'bout a thing that ain't none o' her business?

HUCK Nobody never told her.

PAP Well, I'll learn her to meddle . . .

HUCK Don't you think you can touch the Widow, Pap - or Miz Watson; I'm a-warnin' you!

PAP (Taking HUCK up by the hair.) You warnin' me? Your own rightful father?! (He throws him back down.) Why, there ain't no end to your airs! They say you're rich now, too. How's that?

HUCK They lie. I ain't . . .

PAP (Grabbing HUCK and holding him in a half-nelson.) Don't gimme none o' your lip! I been in town two days, and I hain't heard nothin' but, about you bein' rich. I heard t'bout it away down the river, too. That's why I come. You git me that mney, 'cause of I wants it!

HUCK (Strained, in pain.) You cain't have it. I signed it over to Judge Thatcher, so's if you ever came back you couldn't get at it. He's the trustee, and it's all legal.

PAP (Rage.) Legal?! I'll give you legal! (PAP throws HUCK toward the steps.) You comin' with me, boy . I'll git that mney or you'll starve. Git up! (He pushes HUCK down into living room area and follows. WIDOW enters.)

WIDOW Huckleberry? What is all this . . . (She sees PAP standing on stairs and raises her hand to her mouth in horror.)

PAP You the old hag that ruined my boy? "Legal!"

WIDOW *(Screaming.)* Jim! Jim! Come quick!

HUCK Stay away, Widow Douglas! Please! *(JIM enters, running.)*

WIDOW Jim, stop him! *(PAP grabs HUCK by the arm in defiance.)*

JIM Le'go the child, Mister. *(JIM takes a step toward HUCK and PAP.)*

PAP I s'pose this is legal, too: a nigger talkin' to me like that! *(PAP suddenly produces a hunting knife with his free hand.)*

HUCK Don't come near, Jim. . .

JIM Le'go the child! *(JIM lunges and PAP'S knife flashes out; a line of blood runs down JIM'S arm and he doubles over in pain.)*

HUCK Jim!

PAP There's "legal," nigger!

HUCK Widow Douglas, please stay away! He's my Pap; I want to go with him! I'm tired of bein' civilized! Just let us go!

PAP There now - that's my Hucky talkin'. Now git, boy! *(He shoves HUCK and follows. JIM advances, but PAP whirls on him with the knife, backing off.)* "Legal! "

PAP spits. HUCK and PAP exit. WIDOW DOUGLAS sobs and reaches to help JIM. They exit as lights shift focus. A drunk - EPHNER - appears from shadows as DRUNK climbs up from pit.

DRUNK Hey! Ephner! Lookee! I got 'em!

EPHNER Yeah?

DRUNK *(Holding dead rats on a string.)* Rats, Ephner! Three, nice, fat rats!

EPHNER Jus' look at 'em!

DRUNK

We gonna eat tonight, eh? We gonna eat tonight!

They laugh and congratulate one another as they exit into darkness.

Scene Four

Music fades as lights rise on PAP'S cabin. It is cluttered with barrels and bags of provisions. There is a ladder from the ground floor up through a trap door to upper platform. HUCK sits, leaning against a barrel, while PAP, fortified with frequent pulls on a whiskey jug, delivers a lecture on the government.

PAP

You call this a gov'ment?! Oh yes, this is a wonderful gov'ment, wonderful. Why, lookee here: up in town there was a free nigger, from Ohio, and he had the whitest shirt on you ever did see, and the shiniest hat, an' a gold watch and chain, an' do you know what? They said he was a p'fessor in a college, an' could talk all kinds o' languages, an' knowed ev'rythin'. An' that ain't the wust! They said that, when he was t' home, he could vote. Vote!!! Well, that let me out. Thinks I: "What's this country comin' to? Y'see Hucky, it was 'lection day, an' I was just 'bout to go an' vote m'self, only I were too drunk to get there . . . (HUCK laughs scornfully.) . . . but w hen I heard that there was a state in this country where that there nigger could vote, that let me right out. Says I: "I'll never vote again!" Them's the very words I said; they all heard me. The country can rot for all I care - I'll never vote agin as long as I live.

HUCK

You ever vote in your life before, Pap?

PAP

No. An' you know why, don't ya? 'Cause of I was too busy and hard-set raisin' you, that's why! And now I done lost my last chance to vote, 'cause of you and that theivin', prowlin', infernal, white-shirted nigger that they let run 'round free! (PAP kicks a barrel in his anger. He clutches his foot in pain.) Ow! Dang blast the gov'ment! Dang blast the blasted barrel! (PAP kicks the barrel with his other foot, injuring that also. HUCK doubles up with laughter.) You laughin' at me, boy? Oh, you just let me catch you, boy! You just wait! (PAP makes a grab for HUCK and topples down in a drunken heap. He speaks now in a whining, self-pitying tone.)

PAP My jug . . . where's my jug? Hucky, fetch your ol' Pap his jug. I'm a-hurtin', son; I'm a-hurtin' bad . . .

HUCK pushes jug toward PAP. PAP whimpers and coaxes HUCK to push it closer. HUCK does so-and PAP lunges, grabbing HUCK'S wrist and twisting it.

HUCK Pap . . . don't . . .

PAP Laugh at your Pap, will you?!

HUCK Please . . .

PAP *(Still holding HUCK, giving the jug a shake with his other hand.)* Nigh on empty. Guess I'll have to pay a visit into town, I reckon. *(He releases HUCK.)* Well? Come on, boy you know what to do when your Pap goes into town. *(HUCK steps away from exit as PAP slowly ascends ladder.)* Now don't you think you're goin' nowheres, boy, 'cause you ain't. Nowheres! Understand? *(He has reached the upper platform.)* Now, help me with this thing! Hand it up here! *(HUCK lifts the ladder up to PAP; who sets it beside the trap door. PAP takes a final pull from the jug.)* Whiskey. Gotta get me some whiskey . . . *(He lets the trap door fall shut and starts off.)* . . . damn the town! Damn the gov'ment! Damn it all!

PAP exits. HUCK steps up and addresses audience.

HUCK *(Displaying trickle of blood seeping out between his fingers.)* Musta caught myself on a splinter or somethin', but that gave me the idea to get myself murdered. I couldn't go back to the Widow's, 'cause Pap would just come an' get me again, and make trouble for the Widow more'n likely. I couldn't go home and I couldn't stay, so I figgered I'd let on to people that I was murdered. Who 'd follow me then? *(HUCK drags barrel beneath trap door, climbs on it, leaps and pushes trap open.)* Jackson's Island! I'll find me a canoe and head out for Jackson's Island! It's only 'bout three miles downriver of town, and ain't nobody goes there, mostly .

He spots PAP'S hunting knife, picks it up. He takes a half-plucked turkey which hangs from the rafters, slices it open, and allows it to bleed on the floor. He then slashes same bags of provisions to cause a general mess.

HUCK Gosh, I wish Tom Sawyer could see me now. He'd be right proud o' me! *(He throws the turkey up through the trap door, cuts a small lock of hair from his head and wraps the hair around the bloodied knife blade.)* And there's the murder weapon. *(He drops the knife on the floor.)* Now what did them murderers do with me? Why, shore! They dragged me out to the river. *(HUCK hops up onto barrel, leaps to trap opening and, hanging by his hands, kicks the barrel over, then pulls himself up and out. He looks down into the cabin.)* Well, that's it, then. I'm dead! *(He picks up the turkey and quickly exits, leaving a trail of blood behind him. Lights fade.)*

Scene Five

Lights rise on bare setting, with river and riverbanks in the background. HUCK enters, out of breath.

HUCK *(Voice-over)* In the moonlight, the river looked miles and miles across. It was late, I could tell – it smell't late, and everythin' was so quiet on the island, I could hear people talkin' way over to the ferry landin' . *(HUCK climbs to uppermost platform and surveys the scene. He sits and stretches himself out for sleep.)* Anyways, I was pretty tired. It was goin' to be a grand mornin' , with them all searchin' the river for my body, so I went right on out to sleep.

HUCK sleeps. Lights rise and sound of birds provide transition into morning. Sound of distant cannon up the river. HUCK stirs and sits up. JIM enters, but HUCK doesn't recognize him. HUCK attempts to find a vantage point to see the stranger, approaching nearer. JIM turns around and sees HUCK. JIM is terrified; HUCK is relieved.

HUCK Jim! Jim - it's you! You sho'ly did give me a fright . . .

JIM Don' t hurt me! I never done you no harm when you was alive, Huck Finn, and I hain't never done no harm to no ghost . . .

HUCK Jim . . .

JIM I was always your frien' when you was alive, Huck, warn't I?

HUCK I ain't no ghost, dad blame it! Looky here, see for yourself . . .
(*HUCK extends his arm out for JIM to touch; he does so, tentatively.*) Go on, touch me - ain't no ghost about me. (*JIM takes HUCK'S hand, then the other; he breaks into a big smile and hugs HUCK to his chest.*)

JIM I was powerful sorry to hear you was killed, Huck, but I ain't no mo'. Honey, you is alive as I!

HUCK Shore is good to see a friendly face, Jim, after all them days stuck in Pap's shanty. (*Cannon boom.*)

JIM But look here, Huck - who was murdered in that shanty if it warn't you?

HUCK Shucks - nobody, Jim! I just fixed things up to look like I was dead, so's I could get away from 'em all. (*HUCK moves to look upstream at the town. JIM follows.*)

JIM Well, yestiday night the whole town was talkin' bout you bein' dead, and now they're all out on the river, soundin' a cannon to make your body rise up from the bottom.

HUCK (With a modest grin.) Yup. Kinder grand, ain't it. (*Cannon boom.*) But how do you come to be here, Jim?

JIM (*JIM takes off his hat and tums away froan HUCK, looking out over the river.*) Maybe I better not tell. (*Small pause.*) You wouldn't tell on me if I was to tell you, would you, Huck?

HUCK Blamed if I would, Jim.

JIM (*Sitting.*) Well, it was this way. Som time after yer Pap hauled you off, there come this nigger trader from New Orleans an' he started to git mighty thick with Miz Watson. Now that Miz Watson, she treats me pretty rough, but she always said she wouldn't sell me down to New Orleans. Well, it were a lie, Huck... (*Cannon boom, louder.*)

HUCK *(Pulling JIM down behind the slope.)* Git down, Jim. They're gettin' closer. *(They crouch side by side, glancing out over the river as they speak in more hushed tones.)*

JIM One night I creeps to the parlor do', and the do' warn't quite shet, an' I hear Miz Watson tell the Widow she was a-goin' to sell me, 'cause she could get eight hundred dollars fo' me. The Widow, she try to git her not to do it, but I never waited to hear the rest. I hain't Miz Watson's Jim no more, Huck. I done run off. *(Cannon boom, still louder.)*

HUCK But now you're a runaway nigger, Jim! You know what that means...

JIM She was a-goin' to -sell me - away frcan my wife, Huck . . . away from my child'en.

HUCK *(After a brief pause.)* You got child'en, Jim? You got a fam'ly?

JIM Mind . . . you said you wouldn't tell.

HUCK And I won't, Jim. People can call me a low-down Abolitionist and a slave-lover, but I said I wouldn't tell, an' I won't. *(Large cannon boom. JIM pulls HUCK further down.)*

JIM There they is!

Musicians strike up a funeral song as riverboat appears on the river, moving closer and closer. Cannon booms continue as we hear the voices of people on the ship.

RIVERBOAT CAPTAIN *(Voice-over.)* Look sharp, now - the current sets in the closest about here . . .

WIDOW *(Voice-over.)* Oh, my poor child... *(Calling.)* Huckleberry !
Huckleberry!

CAPTAIN *(Voice-over.)* Maybe he's washed ashore and got tangled among the brush at the water's edge . . .

WIDOW *(Voice-over.)* Oh, Huckleberry . . .

CAPTAIN *(Voice-over.)* Steady as she goes . . . Steady!

CREWMAN *(Voice-over.)* Nothing, Captain. Don't see a thing . . .

Riverboat has turned and begins to move back upstream.

WIDOW *(Voice-over)* Huckleberry . . .

Cannon beams fade out. HUCK and JIM sit up, dazed. Pause.

HUCK Don't that beat all. The grandest day o' my life - and I's dead.

JIM You ain't dead, Honey.

HUCK Ain't no one goin' to look for me no more . . . *(Sudden thought, urgent.)* But they goin' to look for you, Jim! What you gonna do?

JIM I reckoned I'd head on down the river to Cairo, Illinois. In Cairo, Illinois I's a free man -they ain't no slaves in Cairo. An' then I kin wuk and make me some money and buy my fam'ly. An' I kin bring my fam'ly to Cairo an' we kin live.

HUCK They ain't nothin' back in St. Petersburg for me, I reckon. I'se dead.

JIM Don't talk like that, Honey.

HUCK We're both in a fix now . . . let's you and me go together, Jim.

JIM To Cairo?

HUCK Sho' !

JIM *(Claps his hands together and laughs.)* Then that's what we a-goin' to do! *(They hug.)*

HUCK I'm hungry.

JIM Well then, for the Lawd's sake, chile, we gonna set that to rights! Come on, come on... *(JIM exits. HUCK reminds for a moment.)*

HUCK

They was cryin' for 'me. They was sad I'm dead. Wait! Jim! Wait for me ! (*HUCK runs off after JIM. Lights fade.*)